

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The House of Representatives this afternoon approved the conference report for the Farm Bill by a vote of 318-106. This legislation, a compromise between House and Senate versions of the bill, is expected to be approved by the Senate Wednesday evening or Thursday. The bill will then go to the president's desk for his signature.

This Farm Bill provides multi-year funding for a wide range of agriculture, nutrition and conservation programs. Key for the Central Coast, it is the first time California's fruit and vegetable industry (known as specialty crops) have been included in the bill.

"For too many years our farm legislation has sent bales of money to commodity farmers while leaving California's fruit and vegetable industry behind," said Congressman Sam Farr (D-Carmel). "This bill takes a big step toward leveling that playing field. It reforms commodity crop subsidies, directs significant dollars to specialty crop farmers and makes historic investments in our country's nutrition programs."

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Benefits for California:

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- **Specialty crops**, the perishable fruits and vegetables that make up the bulk of the Central Coast agriculture industry, will benefit from more than \$1.3 billion for new programs supporting research, pest management, trade promotion and nutrition. California should see more than three-quarters of that money.
 - **Nutrition programs** were also winners, seeing an increase of more than \$10 billion over five years. The food stamp program, which is renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), will expand significantly. More than 850,000 Californians will see increased benefits over the next five years, and much of those nutrition funds will go to California farmers.
 - **Conservation programs** are boosted by \$7.9 billion over five years. These programs include initiatives to reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water and air quality, increase wildlife habitat and reduce damage caused by floods and other natural disasters.

"For the first time we are looking at a farm bill that helps all farmers from coast to coast, not just the grain belt states," Rep. Farr said. "California--in fact, the whole country--will benefit from the changes made in this farm bill on both the producer and consumer side. Growers will see vital investment in research, marketing and export assistance for

specialty crops to keep producing healthy nutritious food while consumers will reap the benefits of expanded feeding programs including healthy fruit and vegetable snacks to school children."

Benefits for fruit and vegetable farmers:

- Provides \$230 million over five years for **Specialty Crop Research Initiative**. At least \$23 million of that will be dedicated to fresh produce safety grants.
Those funds were secured by Rep. Farr.
- Funds the **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program** for 10 years, providing \$466 million over that time to expand these research grants. The block grants are provided to states to support projects in research, marketing, education, pest and disease management, production and food safety.
- Helps fruit and vegetable producers address food safety, pest and disease management issues with \$377 million for **pest and disease detection and control**.
- Increases funding by \$1 billion for the **USDA Snack Program**, which helps schools provide healthy snacks to students during after-school activities and expands the program to all 50 states.
- Dedicates \$78 million for **organic research priorities**. The bill also sets aside \$22 million for USDA's cost-share program and \$5 million for organic marketing data collection and publication.
- Provides \$33 million to expand opportunities for direct **producer-to-consumer marketing**.

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